

THE
HILL OF VISION



JAMES STEPHENS




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Mary R. Thomas

- May 1915 -

Missionary Sisters of St. Benedict
Benet Lake, Wisconsin



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THE HILL OF VISION



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NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO
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THE
HILL OF VISION

BY
JAMES STEPHENS

AUTHOR OF "INSURRECTIONS"

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1922

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THIRD EDITION

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO
MY WIFE

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*EVERYTHING that I can spy
Through the circle of my eye,
Everything that I can see
Has been woven out of me.
I have sown the stars ; I threw
Clouds of morn and noon and eve
In the deeps and steeps of blue ;
And each thing that I perceive,
Sun and sea and mountain high,
Are made and moulded by my eye :
Closing it, I do but find
Darkness, and a little wind.*

A PRELUDE AND A SONG

THE PRELUDE

(1)

*SONG! glad indeed I am that we have met,
Too long, my sister, you have stayed
from me ;*

*Almost I fancied that you could forget
Those binding promises, that you would be
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Waiting for me.*

*I came and looked about on every side
But where you hid away I could not see ;
And first I searched among the meadows
wide,*

*And up the hill, and under every tree,
And down the stream to see if you were
there*

Waiting for me.

4 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

*But when I did not find you in the mead,
Or by the stream, or under any tree,
I thought you had forgotten we agreed,
Not long ago, that surely you would be
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Waiting for me.*

*You came to me I do not know from where:
I stood and saw you not, I turn and see :
Have you sprung to me from the sunny
air ?*

*Or in the long grass did you curiously
Watch while I wandered, laughing as
you lay
Waiting for me ?*

*And you have brought your pipe ! let
us begin,
Against your skill I match my poetry :
A kiss if I should fail, and if I win
A kiss the same—tune not your melody
Too high at first, I shall not keep you long
Waiting for me.*

(2)

O wind that through the winding,
 green-grown ways,
At morn or eve doth tender-piping
 go ;
Or from the crag, with trumpeting of
 praise,
Doth fright the lambs that crop the
 mead below ;
From cave or hill or wood
Or bustling cloud come thou in merry
 mood ;
Leave those wild murmurings that
 make to weep,
Your long-blown pealing trumpet put
 away,
And where a merry holiday we keep
In sunny fields come thou and dance
 and leap
And sing for joy with us the live-long
 day.

6 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Oft we have seen you linger in the
corn,
And all the red caps nodding at your
play ;
Or in the croft on breezy summer morn
Blowing the light-oared thistle balls
away :
And one day, unobserved, we watched
you where
You stole a ribbon from a maiden
slim,
And blew it to a boy who stood and
prayed,
Which, e'er he kissed, you snatched
away from him,
And whirled it back again unto the
maid
Who was his only hope and thought
and care ;
And while he sighed and while she
laughed you took
The ribbon up and soused it in a brook,
Lost to the lips of lover anywhere.

And yet again we saw
You playing with the milkmaids in
the shaw,
Where, standing near, a satyr trained
his eye
If there was aught forbidden he might
see,
And crept upon you with a mind to
spy
The cause of that uproarious jollity :
Then, when the wild one looked too
curiously,
You blew his own rough beard and
shaggy hair,
And blinded him who stared so
greedily,
Because it was not right that he should
see
The milkmaid's kirtle that you meddled
there.

So you can laugh and play ;
Come pipe with us and join our holiday :

8 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Join in our song and you may chance
to win

For you are free of thought, and hath
no care

To question, did the sinner, told of, sin ?
Or, who has seen ? or, why, or when,
or where ?

No longer bide

By screaming crag or murmurous
waterside,

But your quaint careless lute bring
with you here

And sing to us and we shall sing to
you,

Until we find who has the finest ear,
And who the sweetest voice and gayest
cheer,

And give to him the praise that is his
due.

(3)

O nymphs ! if ye will come from spring
or lake,

Or where the sedge is wavering in the
stream,

To dance with us and with us to
partake

A careless fellowship, or with us dream
Stretched idly on the grass to watch
the gleam

Of sunlight through the leaves—we
welcome true

And will applaud your shy romantic
theme,

Your delicate wild tales and music
new ;

And fair respectful courtesy extend to
you.

But ye, goat-footed fellows, keep away,
Nor through the bushes strain your
wily eyes,

10 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

For ye would love to spoil our holiday,
And fright the nymphs away with
sudden cries,
And whispers lewd, and vicious enter-
prise :
—But if ye promise truly to be good,
Then come with clamant reeds and
improvise,
With antic dance and savour of the
wood
And all the games ye learned in sunlit
solitude.

(4)

Round the trees ye danced and flew
While the boughs danced down to
see,

And the sun was dancing through
Leafy spaces on the tree :
The daisies danced, the meadow-sweet,
All the swaying grassy blades
Danced behind the dancing feet
Of the merry dancing maids.

Left and right and swing around,
Soar and dip and fall for glee,
Happy sky and bird and ground,
Happy wind and happy tree :
Happy minions, dancing mad,
Joy is guide enough for you,
Cure the world of good and bad,
And teach us innocence anew.

12 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Good and bad and right and wrong,
Wave the silly words away :
This is wisdom to be strong,
This is virtue to be gay :
Let us sing and dance until
We shall know the final art,
How to banish good and ill
With the laughter of the heart.

THE SONG

(1)

I HAVE a black, black mind !

What shall I do ?

If I could fly and leave it all behind,

Scaling the blue,

Over the trees and up and out of sight,

And wrong and right

Naming them for the nonsense that
they are !

I'd leave them far,

Drop them behind with this and that
and these,

The tyrannies

That promised to be blessings and are
woes ;

The crows

I fancied to be singing birds,

14 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

The words

That drowse and buzz and drone and
never stay.

Oh ! far away !

Over the pine trees and the mountain
top,

Never to stop

Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and
fly

Into the sky.

(2)

If I had wings just like a bird
I would not say a single word,
I'd spread my wings and fly away
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

If I could swim just like a fish
I'd give my little tail a swish,
I'd swim ten days and nights and then
I never would be found again.

Or if I were a comet bright
I'd drop in secret every night
Ten million miles, and no one would
Know where I kept my solitude.

But I am not a bird or fish
Or comet, so I need not wish,
And need not try to get away
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

16 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

(3)

No more of woeful Misery I sing !
Let her go moping down the pavéd way ;
While to the sunny fields, and every-
thing
That laughs, and to the birds that sing,
I pass along and tune my happy lay :
O sunny sky !
O meadows that the happy clouds are
drifting by !

I go at ease by the easy-sliding stream
As by a friend : I dance in solitude
Among the trees ; I lie and gaze and
dream
Along the grass, or hearken to the
theme
A lark discourses to her tender brood :
O sunny sky !
O meadows that the happy clouds are
drifting by !

There is a thrush lives snugly in a wall,
She lets me come and peep into her nest,
She lets me see and touch the speckled
ball

Under her wing, and does not fear at
all,

Although her shy companion is dis-
tressed :

O sunny sky !

O meadows that the happy clouds are
drifting by !

Sing out, sing out again ye birds of
joy !

Tell yet from branch and bough your
endless tale

Of happiness that nothing can annoy ;
Altho' your mates seem timorous and
coy

If ye sing high enough how can ye fail ?

O sunny sky !

O meadows that the happy clouds are
drifting by !

18 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

On every side, far as the eye can see,
The round horizon, like a bosom's
 swell,
Seems brooding in a sweet maternity,
Where no thing may be hurt, not
 even me,
But she will stoop and kiss and make
 us well :
O sunny sky !
O meadows that the happy clouds are
 drifting by !

I am the brother of each bird and tree
And everything that grows—your chil-
 dren glad ;
Their hearts are in my heart, their
 ecstasy :
O Mother of all mothers, comfort me,
Give me your breast for I am very
 sad :
O sunny sky !
O meadows that the happy clouds are
 drifting by !

(4)

I wandered far away in lucid morn,
When summer did the happy trees
 adorn ;
I left all that I knew of discontent,
Of sorrow and distress and angry
 pain,
And did not say to any where I
 went,
Or when, or if I would return again
From leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and far away,
And was as happy as a person may
To hear the birds in wild wood sing
 their strain,
Each hid in bough, a young and
 joyous band,
Who had no care save only to attain
The food and shelter that lay every
 hand
In leafy solitude.

20 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

I wandered far away and did not turn :
At such a song my heart began to burn,
And joy that I had never known before,
And tears that had no meaning I
 could say,
Came from the music that the birds
 did pour
To me as I went softly on my way
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and I was glad :
I knew the rapture that the forest had :
And every bird was good to me and
 said
A kindly word e'er I had passed him by,
The cheery squirrel sat and ate his
 bread
And did not fear me when I ventured
 nigh
His leafy solitude.

(5)

O birds, my brothers, sing to me once
more

E'er I return again to whence I came,
Give me your joy, your innocence,
your lore,

Your air-born, wind-blown ecstasy I
claim

Because ye truly are my brothers dear :
Sing to me once again before I go from
here.

In woodland ways again we may not
meet ;

Under the slender interlacing boughs,
Where all day long the sunbeams flash
and fleet

On leaf and grass and wing,
And all day long ye sing
And hold carouse :

Because ye truly are my brothers dear
Sing to me once again before I go from
here.

22 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

All things must cease at last ;

Night cometh after day

And day is past.

All things must end,

And friend from loving friend

At the long last will rise and go away ;

And from the slender interlacing boughs

The leaves that flutter now must fail
and fall ;

The time is come I may no more
carouse,

Farewell to ye and good-bye to ye all :

Because ye truly are my brothers dear

Sing to me once again before I go from
here.

(6)

O cloud aloof, afar, scarce to be seen !

O unattainable ! to you alone

I lift my wings,

To you I lean,

I yearn to you beyond all other things ;

Desperate I am for you, for you I
moan ;

I struggle to you and I always fail,

I sink and fall, I fall for ever down,

Deep down where you are not, with-
out avail

Or help or hope : a clod am I, a
clown

Whose wry mouth laughs in fury at
his thought ;

A discontent without a word to say ;

A hope that cannot fasten upon aught ;

A nothing that is anything it may ;

A moodiness, a hatred and a love

Mixed through of good and bad that
cannot show ;

24 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

But you are calm at morning as a dove
That broods in nest is calm, and in
the glow

Of day you meet joy everywhere with
joy,

And, as a woman looking on the child
That sleeps upon her arm has no annoy,
With brow of that content and breast
as mild,

You rest upon the evening and its
gold,

Its rose and pearl, its tender green and
grey :

O peacefulness that never can be
told !

O far away !

Over the pine trees and the mountain
top,

Never to stop

Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly
Into the sky.

(7)

Weary indeed I know that this world
is ;

Then do not sing to me a song of woe,
But tune your pipe to all of aery bliss
Ye can remember, and I will not miss
To join in every chorus that I know :
Give me the very rapture of your song
Else I may go away with thoughts that
do ye wrong.

Sing sweetly, sweetly, once again to me,
Sing me the joy ye have not reached
to yet ;

E'er I go hence give me your ecstasy,
E'er I go hence, e'er far away I flee
Give me the joy which I may not
forget :

The very inner rapture of your song :
Else I may go away with thoughts that
do ye wrong.

26 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

(8)

The joyful song that welcomes in the
spring,
The tender mating song so bravely shy,
The song that builds the nest, the
merry ring
When the long wait is ended and ye
bring
The young birds out and teach them
how to fly.

Sing to me of the beech-nuts on the
ground,
And of the first wild flight at early
dawn,
And of the store of berries some one
found
And hid away, until ye gathered round
And ate them while he shrieked upon
the lawn.

Sing of the swinging nest upon the tree,
And of your mates who call and hide
away,

And of the sun that shines exceedingly,
And of the leaves that dance, and all
the glee

And rapture that begins at break of
day.

28 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

(9)

Follow, follow, follow !
Blackbird, thrush and swallow ;
The air is soft, the sun is dancing through
The dancing boughs ;
A little while me company along
And I will go with you :
Arouse, arouse !
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant
song.

Blackbird, thrush and swallow !
Indeed the visits that I pay are few,
Then come to me as I have come to you :
O follow, follow, follow !
Leave for a little time your nested
boughs
And me accompany along,
Join me while I am happy :
Rouse, O rouse !
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant
song.

Sky, sky,
On high,
O gentle majesty !
Come all ye happy birds and follow,
follow
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Blackbird, thrush and swallow !
No longer in the sunlight sit and drowse
But me accompany along ;
No longer be ye mute :
Arouse, arouse !
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant
song.

Lift, lift, ye happy birds,
Lift song and wing,
And sing and fly,
And fly again and sing
Up to the very blueness of the sky
Your happy words :
O follow, follow, follow !
Where I go racing through the shady
ways,

30 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Blackbird, thrush and swallow,
Shouting aloud our ecstasy of praise :
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Me company along,
The sun is coming with us :
Rouse, O rouse !
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant
song.

(10)

Reach up my wings !

Now broaden into space and carry me

Beyond where any lark that sings

Can get :

Into the utmost sharp tenuity,

The breathing - point, the start, the
scarcely-stirred

High slenderness which never any bird

Has winged to yet !

The moon peace and the star peace
and the peace

Of chilly sunlight :

To the void of space,

The emptiness, the giant curve, the
great

Wide-stretching arms wherein the gods
embrace

And stars are born and suns :

Where germinate

All fruitful seed, where life and death
are one,

32 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Where all things that are not their
times await ;

Where all things that have been again
are gone :

Deep Womb of Promise ! back to thee
again

And forth, revived, all things

Do come and go,

Do wax and wane into and from thy
garden ;

There the flower springs,

Therein does grow

The bud of hope, the miracle to come

For whose dear advent we are striving
dumb and joyless :

Garden of Delight

That God has sowed !

In thee the flower of flowers,

The apple of our tree,

The banner on our towers,

The recompense, the end of misery,

The mightiness, the purity, the light

Whom we are working to has his abode :

Until our back and forth, our life and
death

And life again, our going and return

Prepare the way : until with latest
breath,

Deep-drawn and agonized, for him we
burn

A path : for him prepare

Laughter and love and singing every-
where,

A morning and a sunrise and a day !

O, far away !

Over the pine trees and the mountain
top

Never to stop

Lifting wide wings, I fly and fly and fly

Into the sky.

D

Missionary Sisters of St. Benedict
Benet Lake, Wisconsin

34 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

(11)

*Song ! I am tired to death ! here let me
lie*

*Where we have paced the moving trees
along,*

Till I recover from my ecstasy :

Farewell my Song.

*Once more unto your pipe I lend my
rhyme*

*Who paced in woodland ways with you
along ;*

We have been happy for a little time :

Farewell my Song.

*Soon, soon return or all my world is
naught ;*

*Come back and we shall pace the woods
along,*

And tell unto each other all our thought :

Farewell my Song.

*And when again you do come back to me
Under the sounding trees we'll pace along,
While to your pipe I raise my poetry :
Farewell my Song.*

IN THE POPPY FIELD

MAD Patsy said, he said to me,
That every morning he could see
An angel walking on the sky ;
Across the sunny skies of morn
He threw great handfuls far and nigh
Of poppy seed among the corn ;
And then, he said, the angels run
To see the poppies in the sun.

‘ A poppy is a devil weed,’
I said to him—he disagreed :
He said the devil had no hand
In spreading flowers tall and fair
Through corn and rye and meadow land,
And gurth and barrow everywhere :
The devil has not any flower,
But only money in his power.

And then he stretched out in the sun
And rolled upon his back for fun :
He kicked his legs and roared for joy
Because the sun was shining down,
He said he was a little boy
And wouldn't work for any clown :
He ran and laughed behind a bee,
And danced for very ecstasy.

THE FULNESS OF TIME

ON a rusty iron throne
Past the furthest star of space
I saw Satan sit alone,
Old and haggard was his face ;
For his work was done, and he
Rested in eternity.

And to him from out the sun
Came his father and his friend
Saying, “ Now the work is done
Enmity is at an end ” :
And he guided Satan to
Paradises that he knew.

Gabriel without a frown,
Uriel without a spear,

Raphael came singing down,
Welcoming their ancient peer;
And they seated him beside
One who had been crucified.

LIGHT-O'-LOVE

AND now, at last, I must away,
But if I tend another fire
In some man's house this you will say
—It is not that her love doth tire :
This is the price she has to pay,
For bread she gets no other way,
Still dreaming of her heart's desire.

And so she went out from the door
While I sat quiet in my chair :
She ran back once, again—no more ;
I heard a footstep on the stair,
A lifted latch ; one moment fleet
I heard the noises of the street,
Then silence booming everywhere.

X NUCLEOLUS

I LOOKED from Mount Derision at
Two ivory thrones that were in space,
Whereon a man and woman sat,
The very parallels of grace,
Not lovelier has ever been
By mortal seen.

Then one unto the other said,
—Tell me the secret, hidden well,
Which you have never utteréd,
And I to you again will tell
My guarded thought, and we shall know
Each other so—

Then he—When those who pray beside
My holy altars do not bear
A gift I turn my face aside

And do not listen to the prayer,
But whoso brings a gift shall see
The proof of me—

And she—When, on a festal day,
Youth kneels by youth before my
shrine

I think, if he or he might lay
A ruddy cheek to mine
And comfort my sick soul, I'd lay
My crown away—

THE SOOTHERER

O LITTLE JOY, why do you run so fast
Waving behind you as you go away
Your tiny hand? You smiled at me
and cast

A silver apple, asking me to play :
But when I ran to pick the apple up
You ran the other way.

Little One ! White One ! Shy Little
Gay Sprite !

Do not turn your head across your
shoulder

To mock at me ; it is not right
That you should laugh at me, for I
am older :

Throw me the silver apple once again
You little scolder.

I love you very dearly, yes I do ;
I never saw a girl like you before
In any place. You are more sweetly
new

Than a May moon : you are my store,
My secret and my treasure and the pulse
Of my heart's core.

Throw me the silver apple—I will run
And pick it up and give it you again :
Dear Heart ! Sweet Laughter !—throw
it then for fun

And not for me—if you will but remain !
. . . Nay do not run ; I'll stand thus
far away
And not complain.

Never before—or only one or two :
I did not like them nearly half so well,
Nor half of half so well as I like you,
Throw me the silver apple and I'll tell
Their names, and what I used to say
to them,
—The first was Nell.

Throw me the apple and I'll tell you
more ;

—She had a lovely face, but she was
fat :

We clung together when the rain
would pour

Under a tree or hedge, and often sat
Through long, still, sunny hours—Tell
what she said ?

I'll not do that.

I really couldn't, no, it would be wrong
And utterly unfair, I will not say a word
Of any girl—your voice is like the song
I heard this morning from a soaring bird
. . . I'll whisper then if you come
close to me,

—You've hardly stirred !

She said she loved me better than her
life.

—You need not laugh, she said so
anyway,

And meant it too, and longed to be
my wife :
She kissed me many times and wept
to stay
Within my arms, and did not ever want
To go away.

But she was fat, I will admit that's true :
And so I hid when she came seeking me.
If she had been as beautiful as you . . . !
You are as slender as a growing tree,
And when you move the blood goes
leaping through
The heart of me.

The other girl ? Yes, she is very fair :
Her feet are lighter than the clouds on
high,
And there is morn and noonday in her
hair,
And mellow, sunny evenings in her eye,
And all day long she sings just like a lark
Up in the sky.

I say she did—she loved me very well,
And I loved her until, ah, woe is me !
Until to-day, when passing through
the dell

I met yourself, and now I cannot see
Her face at all, or any face but yours
In memory.

I ought to be ashamed ? well amn't I ?
But that's no comfort when I'm in a trap:
I tell you I shall sit down here and die
Unless you stay—you do not care a rap—
Ah, Little Sweetheart, do not run away,
. . . Have pity on a chap.

You'll go—then listen, you are just a pig,
A little wrinkled pig out of a sty ;
Your legs are crooked and your nose
is big,
You've got no calves, you have a silly
eye,
I don't know why I stopped to talk
to you,
I hope you'll die.

Now cry, go on, mew like a little cat,
And rub your eyes and stamp and
tear your wig ;
I see your ankles ! listen, they are fat,
And so's your head, you're angled like
a twig,
Your back's all baggy and your clothes
don't fit
And your feet are big !

She's gone, bedad, she legged it like a
hare !
You'd think I had the itch, or had a
face
Like a blue monkey—keeps me stand-
ing there,
Not good enough to touch her . . . !
Back I'll race
And make it up with Breed, that's
what I'll do,
. . . *There is a flower that bloometh,*
Tra la la la laddy la. . . .

DANNY MURPHY

HE was as old as old could be,
His little eye could scarcely see,
His mouth was sunken in between
His nose and chin, and he was lean
And twisted up and withered quite,
So that he could not walk aright.

His pipe was always going out,
And then he'd have to search about
In all his pockets, and he'd mow
—O, deary me ! and, musha now !
And then he'd light his pipe, and then
He'd let it go clean out again.

He could not dance or jump or run,
Or ever have a bit of fun

Like me and Susan, when we shout
And jump and throw ourselves about :
But when he laughed then you could
 see
He was as young as young could be.

THE TREE OF THE BIRD

I SAT beneath a tree
In a wide park,
There was a lark,
A bard of ecstasy,
Who sang amid the leaves of his beloved:
—"Thou art most fair,
None can with thee compare,"
Such was his minstrelsy.
"Thy flight is with the stars and with
the wind,
And thou art kind,
O, my most well-beloved,"
And thus, and thus sang he.

The evening sun fell slowly to a hill
Far off and blue,

52 THE TREE OF THE BIRD

But I was too enraptured with the skill
Of that young songster, and the still
Slow rustle of the boughs
To heed how far the sun had stepped
Unto his western house.

A languor came upon me, sad
As was the peace that Adam had
When, on that woeful morning, he
Awaked to unknown misery,
And, all amazed, gave thanks to God
For the green tree, and the green sod,
For the clean wind, and for Eve's eyes,
For all that he had fancied lost
Of Paradise.

He did a moment furthermore
Outpour his many-patterned song,
Down to the ground,
Up to the sky,
About, around,
An ecstasy,
A sheer and sweet swift rush along ;

THE TREE OF THE BIRD 53

And then the song failed, and he
threw

His wings upon the air, and flew
Because he could no longer bide
From her whom he would nest beside.

A wind came breathing out of space
Blowing softly on my face ;
The greying evening stept and stole
About the tree, till branch and bole
Were lost, and there remained to me
A rustling in a mystery :

And this—

A bliss, a happiness,
A song that had been a caress,
A memory of joy—which you,
And every one is welcome to.

PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING

Now that I am dressed I'll go
Down to where the roses blow,
I'll pluck a fair and fragrant one
And make my mother pin it on :
Now she's laughing, so am I—
O the blueness of the sky !

Down the street, turn to the right,
Round the corner out of sight,
Pass the church and out of town—
Dust does show on boots of brown,
I'd better brush them while I can
—Step out, Peadar, be a man !

Here's a field and there's a stile,
Shall I jump it ? wait a while,
Scale it gently, stretch my foot
Across the mud in that big rut

PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING 55

And I'm still clean—faith, I'm not !
Get some grass and rub the spot.

Dodge those nettles, here the stream
Bubbles onward with a gleam
Steely white, and black, and grey,
Bending rushes on its way—
What's that moving ? It's a rat
Washing his whiskers, isn't he fat ?

Here the cow with the crumpled horn
Whisks her tail and looks forlorn,
She wants a milkmaid bad I guess
How her udders swell and press
Against her legs—and here's some sheep,
And there's the shepherd fast asleep.

This is a sad and lonely field,
Thistles are all that it can yield,
I'll cross it quick, nor look behind,
There's nothing in it but the wind :
And if those bandy-legged trees
Could talk they'd only curse or sneeze.

56 PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING

A sour, unhappy, sloppy place—
That boot's loose ! I'll tie the lace
So, and jump this little ditch,
. . . *Her father's really very rich :*
He'll be angry—there's a crow,
Solemn blackhead ! off you go.

There a big, grey, ancient ass
Is snoozing quiet in the grass,
He hears me coming, starts to rise,
Wags his big ears at the flies.
. . . *What'll I say when*—there's a frog,
Go it, long-legs, jig, jig-jog.

He'll be angry, say—" Pooh, pooh,
Boy, you know not what you do."
Shakespeare rot and good advice,
Fat old duffer—those field mice
Have a good time playing round
Through the corn and underground.

But her mother is friends with mine,
She always asks us out to dine,

PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING 57

*And dear Nora, curly head,
Loves me ; so at least she said.*

. . . Damn that ass's hee-hee-haw—
Was that a rabbit's tail I saw ?

*This is the house, Lord, I'm afraid !
A man does suffer for a maid.*

. . . *How will I start?*—the graining's
new

On the door—O pluck up, do.
Don't stand shivering there like that
. . . The knocker's funny—*rat-tat-tat.*

NORA CRIONA

I HAVE looked him round and looked
him through,
Know everything that he will do
In such a case, and such a case,
And when a frown comes on his face
I dream of it, and when a smile
I trace its sources in a while.

He cannot do a thing but I
Peep to find the reason why,
For I love him, and I seek,
Every evening in the week,
To peep behind his frowning eye
With little query, little pry,
And make him if a woman can
Happier than any man.

Yesterday he gripped her tight
And cut her throat—and serve her right!

THE RUNE

THE sun and the star,
The moon and the sea,
As they wandered afar
Sent a message to me.

For our friend, lovingly
We have fashioned a moral,
When there's room to agree
There is no room to quarrel.

And, therefore, we now
Send this thought to the friend
Whom we love, showing how
Every quarrel will end.

To be far brings you near,
But too near is too far ;
Can you love without fear
When the door's on the jar ?

BESSIE BOBTAIL

As down the street she wambled slow,
She had not got a place to go :
She had not got a place to fall
And rest herself—no place at all.
She stumped along and wagged her
pate
And said a thing was desperate.

Her face was screwed and wrinkled
tight
Just like a nut—and, left and right,
On either side she wagged her head
And said a thing, and what she said
Was desperate as any word
That ever yet a person heard.

I walked behind her for a while
And watched the people nudge and
smile :

But ever as she went she said,
As left and right she swung her head,
—“ *O God He knows,*” and “ *God He*
knows,
And, surely God Almighty knows.”

THE TINKER'S BRAT

I SAW a beggar woman bare
Her bosom to the winter air ;
And within the tender nest
Of her famished mother-breast
She laid her child,
And him beguiled,
With crooning song into his rest.

With crooning song and tender word,
About a little singing bird,
Who spread her wings about her
 brood,
And tore her bosom up for food,
And sang the while,
Them to beguile,
All in the forest's solitude.

And, hearing this, I could not see
That she was clad in misery ;
For in her heart there was a glow
Warmed her bare feet in the snow :
In her heart was hid a sun
Would warm a world for every one.

NOTHING AT ALL

THERE was a man was very old :
He sat beside a little fire,
And watched the flame begin to tire.

He held his hands out to the heat,
And in a voice was half a scold,
He told Creation he was cold.

And he was tired and feeble, too :
He could not lift up from his seat
To reach the fuel at his feet.

“ Perhaps,” said he, “ God does not
 know
That I am nearly frozen through ;
He might not like it if He knew.

* * * * *

Poor old chattering, grumbling wight !
 God will hardly come to fetch
 Wood for such an ancient wretch.

But He will send you rain more cold,
 To quench that little flickering light,
 Like this, and He will freeze you quite :
 . . . Men must die when they are old.

WHY TOMÁS CAM WAS GRUMPY

IF I were rich what would I do ?
I'd leave the horse just ready to
shoe,
I'd leave the pail beside the cow,
I'd leave the furrow beneath the
plough,
I'd leave the ducks tho' they should
quack,
“ Our eggs will be stolen before you're
back ” ;
I'd buy a diamond brooch, a ring,
A chain of gold that I would fling
Around her neck. . . . Ah, what an
itch,
If I were rich !

What would I do if I were wise ?
I would not debate about the skies,
Nor would I try a book to write,
Or find the wrong in the tangled right,
I would not debate with learned men
Of how, and what, and why, and when ;
I'd train my tongue to a linnet's song,
I'd learn the words that couldn't go
wrong—

And then I'd say . . . And win the
prize,
If I were wise !

But I'm not that nor t'other, I bow
My back to the work that's waiting
now.

I'll shoe the horse that's standing
ready,

I'll milk the cow if she'll be steady,
I'll follow the plough that turns the
loam,

I'll watch the ducks don't lay from
home.

—And I'll curse, and curse, and curse
again

Till the devil joins in with his big amen,
And none but he and I will wot

When the heart within me starts to rot,
To fester and churn its ugly brew—

. . . Where's my spade? I've work
to do.

THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME

SHE watched the blaze,
And so I said the thing I'd come to say,
Pondered for days.

Her lips moved slow,
And the wide eye she flashed on me
Was sudden as a blow.

She turned again,
Her hands clasping her knees and did
not speak :
She did not deign.

And I, poor gnome !
A chided cur crawls to a hole to hide :
. . . I toddled home.

SHAME

I WAS ashamed, I dared not lift my
eyes,

I could not bear to' look upon the
skies ;

What I had done ! sure, everybody
knew !

From everywhere hands pointed where
I stood,

And scornful eyes were piercing through
and through

The moody armour of my hardihood.

I heard their voices too, each word an
asp

That buzz'd and stung me sudden as
a flame :

And all the world was jolting on my
name,
And now and then there came a
wicked rasp
Of laughter, jarring me to deeper
shame.

And then I looked, but there was no
one nigh,
No eyes that stabbed like swords or
glinted sly,
No laughter creaking on the silent air :
And then I found that I was all alone
Facing my soul, and next I was aware
That this mad mockery was all my
own.

I WISH

I WISH I had not grown to man's
estate,

I wish I was a silly urchin still,
With bounding pulses and a heart elate
To meet whatever came of good or ill.

Of good or ill ! not knowing what was
good,

But groping to a better than I knew,
And guessing deeper than I under-
stood,

And hoping truths that never could be
true.

Of good or ill ! when, so it often seems,
There is no good at all but only ill.

Alas, the sunny summer - time of
dreams,
The dragons I had nerved my hand to
kill,
The maids I might have rescued, and
the queen
Whose champion long ago I could
have been.

SECRETS

WHEN I was young I used to think,
That every eye peered through a chink,
And every man was hid behind
His own thick self where none could
find.

That every woman in the street,
Looking fair and smiling sweet,
Was maybe hiding thoughts that were
Not quite so sweet, nor quite so fair
As her kind smile and blossom face ;
She hid in some forgotten place
Within herself and would not dare
To let another see her there.

And though I'm older still I see
In every face a mystery.

CROOKED-HEART

I LOOSED an arrow from my bow
Down into the world below ;
Thinking “ This will surely dart,
Guided by my guiding fate,
Into the malignant heart
Of the person whom I hate.”

So by hatred feathered well
Swift the flashing arrow fell :
And I watched it from above
Disappear
Cleaving sheer
Through the only heart I love.

Such the guard my angels keep !
But my foe is guarded well :
I have slain my love and weep
Tears of blood, while he, asleep,
Does not know an arrow fell !

MAC DHOUL

I SAW them all,
I could have laughed out loud
To see them at their capers ;
That serious, solemn-footed, weighty
 crowd
Of angels, or say resurrected drapers :
Each with a thin flame swinging round
 his head,
With lilting wings and eyes of holy
 dread,
And curving ears strained for the great
 foot-fall,
And not a thought of sin— . . .
I don't know how I kept the laughter
 in.

For I was there,
Unknown, unguessed at, snug
In a rose tree's branchy spurt,
With two weeks' whisker blackening
 lug to lug,
With tattered breeks and only half a
 shirt.
Swollen fit to burst with laughter at
 the sight
Of those dull angels drooping left and
 right
Along the towering throne, each in a
 scare
To hear His foot advance
Huge from the cloud behind, all in a
 trance.

And suddenly,
As silent as a ghost,
I jumped out from the bush,
Went scooting through the glaring,
 nerveless host
All petrified, all gaping in a hush :

Came to the throne and, nimble as a rat,
Hopped up it, squatted close, and
there I sat,
Squirming with laughter till I had to cry,
To see Him standing there
Frozen with all His angels in a stare !

He raised His hand,
His hand ! 'twas like a sky !
Gripped me in half a finger,
Flipped me round and sent me spinning high
Through screaming planets : faith, I
didn't linger
To scratch myself, and then adown I
sped
Scraping old moons and twisting heels
and head,
A chuckle in the void, till . . . here I
stand
As naked as a brick,
I'll sing the Peeler and the Goat in
half a tick.

THE MERRY POLICEMAN

I WAS appointed guardian by
The Power that frowns along the sky,
To watch the tree and see that none
Plucked of the fruit that grew thereon.

There was a robber in the tree,
Who climbed as high as ever he
Was able, at the top he knew
The apple of all apples grew.

The night was dark, the branch was
thin,
In every wind he heard the din
Of angels calling—"Guardian, see
That no one climbs upon the tree."

80 THE MERRY POLICEMAN

And when he saw me standing there
He shook with terror and despair,
But I said to him—" Be at rest,
The best to him who wants the best."

So I was sacked, but I have got
A job in hell to keep me hot.

THE FAIRY BOY

A LITTLE Fairy in a tree
Wrinkled his wee face at me :
And he sang a song of joy
All about a little boy,
Who upon a winter night,
On a midnight long ago,
Had been wrapt away from sight
Of the world and all its woe :
Wrapt away,
Snapt away
To a place where children play
In the sunlight every day.

Where the winter is forbidden,
Where no child may older grow,
Where a flower is never hidden
Underneath a pall of snow ;

Dancing gaily
Free from sorrow,
Under dancing summer skies,
Where no grim mysterious morrow
Ever comes to terrorize.

This I told a priest and he
Spoke a word of mystery,
And with candle, book and bell,
Tolling Latin like a knell,
Ruthlessly
From the tree,
Sprinkling holy water round,
He drove the Fairy down to hell,
There in torment to be bound.

So the tree is withered and
There is sorrow on the land :
But the devils milder grow
Dancing gay
Every day
In that kinder land below :
There the devils dance for joy
And love that little wrinkled boy.

WHAT THE DEVIL SAID

It was the night time, God the Father
 Good,
Weary of praises, on a sudden stood
Up from His throne and leaned upon
 the sky,
For He had heard a sound, a little
 cry,
Thin as a whisper climbing up the
 steep.

And He looked down to where the
 Earth asleep
Rocked with the moon, He saw the
 whirling sea
Swing round the world in surgent
 energy,

84 WHAT THE DEVIL SAID

Tangling the moonlight in its netted
foam,
And nearer saw the white and fretted
dome
Of the ice-capped pole spin back again
a ray
To whistling stars, bright as a wizard's
day.

But these He passed with eyes intently
wide,
Till closer still the mountains He espied
Squatting tremendous on the broad-
backed Earth ;
Each nursing twenty rivers at a birth.
And then minutely sought He for the
cry
Had climbed the slant of space so
hugely high.

He found it in a ditch outside a town,
A tattered, hungry woman crouching
down

WHAT THE DEVIL SAID 85

By a dead babe—so there was nought
to do,

For what is done is done ; and back
He drew

Sad to His Heaven of ivory and gold ;
And as He sat, all suddenly there rolled
From where the woman wept upon the
sod

Satan's deep voice, “ *O thou unhappy
God !* ”

TO THE TREE

BALLAD ! I have a message you must
bear

Unto a certain tree : I may not tell
Where she abides, only, she is more fair
Than any tree that grows down in a
dell,

Or on a mountain top, or by a well,
Or as a lovely sentinel beside
A roaming stream. No words can
speak her well,

Nor lyric sing enough her arms so wide,
Her grace, her peace, her innocence,
her happy pride.

Come, Ballad, quickly back to me
again,

After you have delivered to the tree
My humble service, and if she will deign
To trust you with a message back,
then see

You strictly do forget no word that she
May speak to you, no smallest yes or no :
And what she looked like when she
spoke of me,

And if she begged you stay or bade
you go,
Or hesitated ere she said—what you
shall know.

Say—I shall be with her ere day is
done,

When the flushed evening blanches to
the dark,

And one last gleam of all that was the
sun

Rests on her topmost branches, when
the lark

Dips to the dew-steeped grasses in the
park

And only now and then sends from
below

A sleepy song : then, swift as to the
mark

An arrow flies, so swiftly will I go
Nor stay until her branches wide I
halt below.

There is a crow, of sly and wicked
fame,

Who, with Apollo's aid, I hope to slay,
For he has dared and come nigh to
my dame

And in her heart would hide him well
away :

A wicked crow is he and hoary-grey ;
He listens to the life that throbs so
fleet

Along the trunk and by the slender way
Of her young veins whereat the
branches meet :

A curious, bad, old, wicked crow and
indiscreet.

Of every tree most beautiful and
queen !

The grasses at her feet live in her glee,
About her all the forest folk are seen ;
The timid nymph bends there a ready
knee,

And mighty Pan himself, unwillingly,
Yet all perforce, must stoop before
her grace,

And round about in a wild ecstasy
The light-foot satyrs (stayed from an
embrace)

Stare shamefully and dance and mince
with antic pace.

Fortress of melody ! Well hidden
heart !

Deep bosomed lady whom I love so well !
Dear solitude of singer without art !
Sweet shadiness wherein I long to
dwell,

Enrapt and comforted from any spell
Of thought or care or woefulness or sin ;

Or trouble which a man may not fore-
tell ;

Or slothful ease which it is death to win ;
Or fear that cometh at the last and
creepeth in.

If you among her little leaves will fly
And what they whisper bring to me
again,

Dear Ballad, I will write your history
Upon a sheepskin with a golden pen ;
It shall be read by women and by men :
Each youth will sing it to his paramour
As they go roving in the evening when
All joy is innocence and love is lore,
And you and youth and love will live
for evermore.

Rapture and joy and ecstasy and pain !
The windy trumpets of the void shall
soar

Over the sky. The Morning Stars
again

Will sing together joyous as of yore :
The sea shall tramp with banners on
the shore :
The little hills skip merrily along
The forest leave its field and with a
roar
Stride down the pathway shouting out
a song,
And everything be happy as the day
is long.

Envoi

Ballad, farewell ! go tell her that I
burn,
Say that I die if she refuses me :
And I shall wait and sigh till you
return,
And plague the god of life and love
to favour me.

ORA PRO NOBIS

A BIRD sings now ;
Merrily
Sings he
Of his mate on the bough,
And her eggs in the tree ;
But yonder a hawk
Swoops out of the blue
And the singing is over
—Is this true ?
God now have mercy on me and on
you.

THE END OF THE ROAD

To Æ.

THIS is a thing is true,
Everything comes to an end :
The loving of me and you,
The walking of friend and friend.

Shall I weep the beauty I knew,
Or the greatness gathered away
Or the truth that is only true,
As the things that a man will say ?

The child and the mother will die,
The wife and husband sever,
The sun will go out of the sky,
And the rain will be falling for ever.

94 THE END OF THE ROAD

For ever until the waves rear
To the skies with a terrible tune,
And cover the earth and the air,
And wash up the beach of the moon.

Then go, for all things must end,
And this is true as I say—
A friend will be leaving a friend,
And a man will be going away.

WIND AND TREE

To Æ.

“A WOMAN is a branchy tree
And man a singing wind,
And from her branches carelessly
He takes what he can find :
Then wind and man go far away
While winter comes with loneliness,
With cold and rain and slow decay
On woman and on tree till they
Droop to the ground again and be
A withered woman, a withered tree ;
While wind and man wooundismayed
Another tree, another maid.”

EVE

LONG ago, in ages grey,
I was fashioned out of clay :
Builted with the sun and moon,
Kneaded to a holy tune ;
And there came to me a breath
From the House of Life and Death.

Then the sun roared into fire,
And the moon with swift desire
Leaped among the starry throng
Singing on her journey long ;
And I climbed up from the sod,
Holding to the hand of God.

In a garden fair and wide
Looking down a mountain side,
Prone I lay and felt the press
Of Immensity's caress,

There I lived a space and knew
What the Power meant to do.

Till upon a day there came
Down to me a voice of flame,
“Thou the corner-stone of man,
Rise and set about my plan,
Nothing doubting, for a guide
I have quickened in thy side.”

From the garden wide and fair,
From the pure and holy air,
Down the mountain side I crept
Stumbling often, ill-adept ;
Feeling pangs of woeful bliss,
Rounding from the primal kiss.

Then from out my straining side
Came the son who is my guide :
Him I nursed through faithful days
Till I faltered at his gaze,
Staring boldly when he saw
I was woman, life, and law.

Life and law and dear delight :
I the moon upon the night
All alluring : I the tree
Growing nuts of mystery :
I the tincture and the dew
That the apple reddens through.

Weaving Life and Death I go :
Building what I do not know :
Planting tho' in sore distress,
Gardens in the wilderness :
Palaces too big to scan
By the little eye of man.

Still the sun roars out in fire,
And the moon with pale desire
Keeps the path appointed her
In the starry theatre :
Sun and moon and I are true,
To the work we have to do.

THE BREATH OF LIFE

(To Elizabeth Bloxham)

AND while they talked and talked, and
while they sat
Changing their base minds into baser
coin ;
And telling—they ! how truth and
beauty join,
And how a certain this was good, but
that
Was baser than the viper or the toad,
Or the blind beggar glaring down the
road.

I turned from them in fury, and I ran
To where the moon shone out upon
the height,

100 THE BREATH OF LIFE

Down the long reaches of a summer
 night
Stretching slim fingers, and the starry
 clan
Grew thicker than the flowers that we
 see
Clustered in quiet fields of greenery.

The quietudes that sunder star from
 star,
The hazy distances of loneliness,
Where never eagle's wing or timid press
Of lark or wren could venture, and the
 far
Profundities untravelled and unstirred
By any act of man or thought or word.

These held me with amazement and
 delight :
I yearned up through the spaces of
 the sky,
Beyond the rolling clouds, beyond the
 high

THE BREATH OF LIFE 101

And delicate white moon, and up the
height,
And past the rocking stars, and out to
where
The aether failed in spaces sharp and
bare.

The breath that is the very breath of
life
Throbbled close to me : I heard the
pulses beat,
That lift the universes into heat :
The slow withdrawal, and the deeper
strife
Of His wide respiration, like a sea
It ebbed and flooded through im-
mensity.

The Breath of Life in wave on mighty
wave !
O moon and stars swell to a raptured
song !
Ye mountains toss the harmony along !

102 THE BREATH OF LIFE

O little men with little souls to save
Swing up glad chantings, ring the
 skies above,
With boundless gratitude for bound-
 less love !

Probing the ocean to its steepest drop ;
Rejoicing in the viper and the toad,
And the blind beggar glaring down the
 road ;
And they who talk and talk and never
 stop
Equally quickening ; with a care to
 bend
The gnat's slant wing into a swifter
 end.

* * * * *

The silence clung about me like a gift,
The tender night-time folded me around
Protectingly, and in a peace profound
The clouds drooped slowly backward,
 drift on drift

THE BREATH OF LIFE 103

Into the darkness, and the moon was
gone,
And soon the stars had vanished every
one.

But on the sky, a handsbreadth in the
west,
A faint cold radiance crept and soared
and spread,
Until the rustling heavens overhead,
And the grey trees and grass were
manifest :
Then through the chill a golden spear
was hurled,
And the great sun tossed laughter on
the world.

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

I THOUGHT I heard Him calling ! Did
you hear
A sound, a little sound ? My curious
ear
Is dinned with flying noises, and the
tree
Goes — whisper, whisper, whisper
silently,
Till all its whispers spread into the
sound
Of a dull roar . . . Lie closer to the
ground,
The shade is deep and He may pass
us by,
We are so very small, and His great
eye,

IN THE COOL OF EVENING 105

Customed to starry majesties, may
gaze

Too wide to spy us hiding in the maze :
—Ah, misery ! the sun has not yet gone
And we are naked : He will look upon
Our crouching shame, may make us
stand upright

Burning in terror—O that it were
night !

He may not come . . . What ? listen,
listen, now—

He's here ! lie closer . . . *Adam, where
art thou ?*

PSYCHOMETRIST

I LISTENED to a man and he
Had no word to say to me :
Then unto a stone I bowed,
And it spoke to me aloud.

“ The force that bindeth me so long,
Once sang in the linnet’s song,
Now upon the ground I lie,
While the centuries go by.

“ Linnets must for joy atone
And be fastened into stone,
While upon the waving tree
Stones shall sing in energy.”

THE WINGED TRAMP

I SAW a poor man walking slow,
Scarcely knowing where to go ;
And from door to door he said,
Unto those who stood within,
—“ Give me, with a little bread,
Absolution for my sin.”

And the people always said,
—“ Friend, come in and eat our bread ;
Lay you down and rest a while,
Sleep a little time and pray
Unto God and He will smile
All your weighty sin away.”

Then the poor man rose and flew
In the air, and no one knew

108 THE WINGED TRAMP

That He was God's beloved Son :
And He told His Father plain
What the folk had said and done :
—So God spared the world again.

THE MONKEY'S COUSIN

I SHALL reach up, I shall grow
Till the high gods say—" Hello,
Little brother, you must stop
Ere our shoulders you o'ertop."

I shall grow up, I shall reach
Till the little gods beseech
—" Master, wait a little, do,
We are running after you ! "

I shall bulk and swell and scale
Till the little gods shall quail,
Running here and there to hide
From the terror of my stride.

THE LONELY GOD

(To Stephen MacKenna)

So Eden was deserted, and at eve
Into the quiet place God came to
grieve.

His face was sad, His hands hung
slackly down

Along His robe, too sorrowful to frown
He paced along the grassy paths and
through

The silent trees, and where sweet
flowers grew

Tended by Adam. All the birds had
gone

Out to the world, and there was left
not one

To sing the lonely God out of His
grief—

The silence broken only when a leaf
Tapt lightly on a leaf, or when the
wind,
Slow-handed, swayed the bushes to its
mind.

And so along the base of a round hill,
Rolling in fern, He bent His way
until

He neared the little hut which Adam
made,

And saw its dusky roof-tree overlaid
With greenest leaves. Here Adam and
his spouse

Were wont to nestle in their little house
Snug at the dew-time : here He, stand-
ing sad,

Sighed with the wind, nor any pleasure
had

In heavenly knowledge, for His dar-
lings twain,

Had gone from Him to learn the mode
of pain,

112 THE LONELY GOD

And what was meant by sorrow and
 despair,
—Drear knowledge for a Father to
 prepare.

There He looked sadly on the little
 place,
A beehive round it was, without a trace
Of occupant or owner : standing dim
Among the gloomy trees it seemed to
 Him

A final desolation, the last word
Wherewith the lips of silence had been
 stirred.

Chaste and remote, so tiny and so
 shy,

So new withal, so lost to any eye,
So pac't of memories all innocent
Of days and nights that in it had been
 spent

In blithe communion, Adam, Eve, and
 He,

Afar from Heaven and its gaudery.

And now no more ! He still must be
the God
But not the friend ; a Father with a
rod
Whose voice was fear, whose counte-
nance a threat,
Whose coming terror, and whose going
wet
With penitential tears ; not evermore
Would they run forth to meet Him as
before
With careless laughter, striving each
to be
First to His hand and dancing in their
glee
To see Him coming—They would hide
instead
At His approach, or stand and hang
the head,
Speaking in whispers, and would learn
to pray
Instead of asking, “Father, if we
may.”

114 THE LONELY GOD

Never again to Eden would He haste
At cool of evening, when the sun had
 paced

Back from the tree-tops, slanting from
 the rim

Of a low cloud, what time the twilight
 dim,

Knit tree to tree in shadow, gathering
 slow

Till all had met and vanished in the
 flow

Of dusky silence, and a brooding star
Stared at the growing darkness from
 afar,

While haply now and then some nested
 bird

Would lift upon the air a sleepy word
Most musical, or swing its airy bed
To the high moon that drifted over-
 head.

'Twas good to quit at evening His
 great throne,

To lay His crown aside, and all alone
 To stoop down quiet airs at eventide
 Unkenned by angels : silently to hide
 In the green fields, by dappled shades,
 where brooks,
 Through leafy solitudes and quiet
 nooks
 Flowed far from heavenly majesty and
 pride,
 From light astounding and the wheel-
 ing tide
 Of roaring stars. Thus does it ever
 seem
 Good to the best to stay aside and
 dream
 In narrow places, where the hand can
 feel
 Something beside, and know that it is
 real.

His angels ! Silly creatures who could
 sing
 And sing again, and delicately fling
 1 2

116 THE LONELY GOD

The smoky censer, bow and stand
 aside
All mute in adoration : thronging
 wide,
Till nowhere could He look but soon
 He saw
An angel bending humbly to the
 law
Mechanic ; knowing nothing more of
 pain,
Than when they were forbid to sing
 again,
Or swing anew the censer, or bow
 down,
In humble adoration of His frown.
This was the thought in Eden as He
 trod
. . . It is a lonely thing to be a God.

So long ! Afar through Time He bent
 His mind,
For the beginning, which He could
 not find,

Through endless centuries and back-
wards still

Endless for ever, till His 'stonied will
Halted in circles, dizzied in the swing
Of mazy nothingness—His mind could
bring

Not to subjection, grip or hold the
theme

Whose wide horizon melted like a dream
To thinnest edges. Infinite behind
The piling centuries were trodden
blind

In gulfs chaotic—so He could not see
When He was not who always had
To Be.

O solitude unspeakable ! to be
For ever with oneself ! never to see
An equal face, or feel an equal hand,
To sit in state and issue reprimand,
Admonishment or glory, and to smile
Disdaining what has happened the
while !

118 THE LONELY GOD

O to be breast to breast against a foe !
Against a friend ! to strive and not
to know

The laboured outcome : Love nor be
aware

How much the other loved, and greatly
care

With passion for that happy love or
hate,

Nor know what joy or dole was hid
in fate.

“ For I have ranged the spacy width
and gone

Swift north and south, striving to
look upon

An ending somewhere. Many days I
sped

Hard to the west, a thousand years I
fled

Eastwards in fury, but I could not
find

The fringes of the Infinite. Behind

And yet behind, and ever at the end
Came new beginnings, paths that did
not wend

To anywhere were there : and ever vast
And vaster spaces opened—till at last
Dizzied with distance, thrilling to a
pain

Unnameable, I turned to Heaven again.

“ And there My angels were prepared
to fling

The cloudy incense, there prepared to
sing

My praise and glory—O, in fury I
Then roared them senseless, then threw
down the sky

And stamped upon it, buffeted a star
With My great fist, and flung the sun
afar :

Shouted My anger till the mighty
sound

Rung to the width, frightening the
furthest bound

120 THE LONELY GOD

And scope of hearing : tumult vaster
still,
Thronging the echo, dinned my ears,
until
I fled in silence, seeking out a place
To hide Me from the very thought of
Space.

“ And so,” He thought, “ in Mine own
Image I
Have made a man, remote from
Heaven high
And all its humble angels : I have
poured
My essence in his nostrils : I have
cored
His heart with My own spirit ; part
of Me
His mind with laboured growth un-
ceasingly
Must strive to equal Mine ; must ever
grow
By virtue of My essence till he know

Both good and evil through the solemn
test

Of sin and retribution, till, with zest,
He feels his godhead, soars to challenge
Me

In Mine own Heaven for supremacy.

“Through savage beasts and still more
savage clay,

Invincible, I bid him fight a way
To greater battles, crawling through
defeat

Into defeat again : ordained to meet

Disaster in disaster : prone to fall

I prick him with My memory to call

Defiance at his victor and arise

With anguished fury to his greater
size

Through tribulation, terror and despair

Astounded, he must fight to higher air,

Climb battle into battle till he be

Confronted with a flaming sword and
Me.

122 THE LONELY GOD

“The topmost blossom of his growing I
Shall take unto Me, cherish and lift high
Beside Myself upon My holy throne :
—It is not good for God to be alone.

The perfect woman of his perfect race
Shall sit beside Me in the highest place
And be My Goddess, Queen, Com-
panion, Wife,

The rounder of My majesty, the life,
Of My ambition. She will smile to see
Me bending down in worship at her
knee

Who never bent before, and she will
say,

—“Dear God, who was it taught *Thee*
how to pray ? ”

“And through eternity, adown the
slope

Of never-ending time, compact of hope,
Of zest and young enjoyment, I and
She

Will walk together, sowing jollity

THE LONELY GOD 123

Among the raving stars, and laughter
through

The vacancies of Heaven, till the blue
Vast amplitudes of space lift up a song,
The echo of our presence, rolled along
And ever rolling where the planets sing
The majesty and glory of the King.

Then conquered, thou, eternity, shall
lie

Under my hand as little as a fly.”

Then stooping to the hut—a beehive
round—

God entered in and saw upon the
ground

The dusty garland, Adam, (learned to
weave)

Had loving placed upon the head of
Eve

Before the terror came, when joyous
they

Could look for God at closing of the
day

124 THE LONELY GOD

Profound and happy. So the Mighty
Guest
Bent, took, and placed the blossoms
in His breast.
“ This,” said He gently, “ I shall show
My queen
When she hath grown to Me in space
serene,
And say ‘ ’twas worn by Eve.’ ” So,
smiling fair,
He spread abroad His wings upon the
air.

THE END

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